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THE

ATONE

OF

CHRIST,

EXPLAINED and VINDICATED,

AGAINST

Late ATTEMPTS to exclude it out of
the WORLD.

By ISAAC BACKUS,

PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL.

Lift up a Standard for the People.

Isaiah lxii. 10.

Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.

Rev. v. 9.

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TO enjoy safety and happiness is the desire of all nations ; and the great shakings now among them, will undoubtedly introduce this unspeakable enjoyment, under the Government of THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. This he could not be, if he had not suffered the full penalty of the law of God for his people. Therefore when it is openly denied that he did any such thing, we are loudly called upon to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints. How far this duty is attended to, in the following discourse, the Reader will judge.

Middleborough, Nov. 13, 1787.



T H E
ATONEMENT of CHRIST,
EXPLAINED and VINDICATED.

EVIDENCE of the infinite wisdom, goodness and power of God, has appeared in all his works from the beginning ; but none of the children of Adam were ever willing to glorify him as God, until they were renewed by his grace. And where his grace hath been clearly revealed, they have always discovered a disposition to neglect it, and to abuse its precious privileges. His law is holy, just and good ; and his gospel reveals the way wherein it is magnified and made honorable in the salvation of sinners, even the chief of them. This salvation is from sin, as well as from misery ; and the nature of sin is worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, or loving of pleasures more than God. Therefore the gospel, the best of news, hath ever been offensive to mankind while in their natural blindness. Yea, this blindness cannot be plainly spoken of, without danger of an angry inquiry, *Are we blind also ?* Yet none of them would think it equal, in their temporal affairs, to have *interested* men set up as their judges, however capable they were to discern what was right, in cases wherein they were not biassed. Felix found a vast difference, betwixt hearing of the faith in Christ as a curiosity, and his being arrested thereby as a criminal before God. Acts xxiv. 24, 25. When freemen have fairly discharged all their *debts*, they ever claim a right to be-
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flow *gifts* on whom they please ; and gifts cannot be bestowed with honor upon any who claim them as debts. Neither can debts be forgiven by a creditor, nor crimes by authority, while the debtor or the criminal denies the justice of the charge or sentence against him, without giving up the nature of all government ; the end of which, is the safety and happiness of the faithful, relief to the poor and needy, and infliction of just punishment upon the wicked. And the infliction of such punishment is as much a debt to the universe, as any thing can be a debt to individuals ; *For the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* And every child of Adam is a *servant of sin*, until he obeys *this form of doctrine from the heart.* Rom. vi. 16—23.

But men have wracked their inventions, from age to age, to avoid this heart obedience, and yet to grasp the honors and profits of religion to themselves. And they have now gone so far in this way, as openly to set up their reason above revelation, and their feelings above reason. Our Lord says to all, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me ; for whosoever will save his life, shall lose it ; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.* Luke ix. 23, 24. But a noted minister in Boston lately said, “ *Self-determination* in us men, is the only basis of moral obligation. To go about to prove this, by a long train of reasoning, would be very like holding a candle to the sun, in its meridian lustre, for light that we might be able to see. It is a first, and fundamental principle in morals, and to be evidenced, not by arguing, but by an appeal to common sense ; or, in other words, to the perceptions of mankind universally. We *feel* the existence, and operation of
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of this power every day we live." And if it is not so, he says, "Religion, whether natural or revealed, is a senseless pretence, suited only to serve the purposes of politicians and priests." *

Thus he set up reason above revelation, and feelings above reason; for self-determination, so far from being the only basis of moral obligation, that all are *rebellious children, who take counsel, but not of God, and that cover with a covering, but not of his spirit*. Isai. xxx. 1, 9. From such counsel, multitudes are now carried away with the doctrine of universal salvation. Others oppose that doctrine, who yet act upon the principle from whence it came; as we may see in a book published last year, by Mr. John Remmele, of Newport in New-Hampshire, to prove that atonement consisted wholly in the excellency of Christ's teaching and example, in his life and death, and not at all in his suffering the penalty of the law for sinners. This book was sent to me from thence, with a request of my remarks upon this most important subject. His arguments are as follow.

"1. Nothing could merit favour for sinners, which was not in itself agreeable to the divine mind. Christ is sometimes represented in scripture as paying a price, by which he purchased his people. Acts xx. 28. 1 Cor. vi. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 1. Whatever that *price* was, it is self-evidently true, that it was simply in itself pleasing to God; therefore the sufferings, the misery, which he endured, could not be the price.—*I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God*. Ezek. xviii. 23, 32. If God can have no pleasure in the misery and just sufferings of a sinful disobedient creature, *reason* forbids the conclusion, that he should have any pleasure in the sufferings of his dutiful well-beloved Son." P. 19.

Answer,

* Chauncy on God's benevolence, 1784, p. 128, 130, 137.

Answer, He can have no pleasure in the ruin and misery of any creature, simply considered ; but all the punishments that ever came upon fallen angels, or fallen men, were for iniquity, transgression and sin ; and if Christ did not suffer for the sins of men, justice could not have been honored by his sufferings, nor in saving any sinner from hell. For *by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.—God hath set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God—that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.* Rom. iii. 20—26. We are warned against glorying in the wisdom, might or riches of men ; because *in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* Jer. ix. 23, 24. Isaiah xlv. 22—25. From whence the apostle proved, that the preaching of *Christ crucified*, was unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them who were called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 1 Cor. i. 23—31. And also that we should ever keep to the *line of things made ready to our hand*, and not have our minds corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, as the serpent beguiled Eve. The word *line* in this text, hath been applied to the lines which men have drawn around dioceses and parishes, by teachers who have *measured themselves by themselves.* 2 Cor. x. 12—17. xi. 3. And they have been so much beguiled by the adversary, as to claim all the power for themselves and earthly rulers, that Abraham, Moses, Aaron and David ever had, over the bodies and souls of men. Yea, much more ; for the whole of their power, was to command their children and their household after them, *to keep the way of the Lord,*

Lord, to do justice and judgment. Gen. xviii. 16. But the old dragon hath ever been at war with the seed of the true church, who *keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*, wherein the merits of his *blood* is the first article. Rev. xii. 11, 17. He is established as our prophet, priest and king, by the *oath of God*, in an *order* above Abraham, Moses, Aaron or David. Rom. xiv. 10—12. Heb. iii. 3. vii. 4—22. And the gospel says, *Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion; for thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.—Thy God reigneth.—He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.* And to believe this report with the *heart*, and to confess it with the *mouth*, is the only way of *salvation*. Isai. lii. 3, 7. liii. 1, 9—11. Rom. x. 4, 10, 15, 16. He said, *They who hate me without a cause, are more than the hairs of mine head, then I restored that which I took not away.* Psal. lxix. 4. John xv. 25. Yet it is now said,

“2. If Christ appeared in the place of sinners, to ward off the stroke of vengeance, by giving it an opportunity to alight on him—the consequence is unavoidable, that he in a *very short season* endured the same quantity of misery which would have born sinners down to eternity. A thought which exceeds all rules of computation, and departs from all principles of just reasoning.” P. 21.

Answer,

Answer, Here is the root of all the evils in the world. Angels and men have erred, because their knowledge was limited ; and the only certain security against all error, is obedience to the revealed will of the *Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* It is the only perfect law of liberty. James i. 16—25. Before our glorious Shepherd, all nations are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. And he says, *I lay down my life for the sheep ;* - a chosen number, and not for all mankind. Isaiah xi. 10, 11, 17. John x. 15, 26—29. And when he was going to do it, he said, *If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?* Luke xxiii. 31. Nothing is more unreasonable, than for us to imagine, that finite can comprehend infinite, or that debtors and criminals are adequate judges of their own causes. Yet it is now said,

“ 3. Those animals made use of in ancient rites are never said to make atonement, but this is often acknowledged of the priests who were active in the matter. Therefore, so far as sufferings were inflicted on Christ, and so far as atonement consists in *sufferings*, he can only be considered as the *medium* by which atonement was made, and not the person who made it. What Christ *did*, and not what was done to him, was the matter of atonement.” P. 22, 23.

Answer, Those animals were innocent, while the priests who offered them were guilty ; and were daily to offer, first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people ; therefore *Jesus was Surety of a better testament.* For if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, *sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from*
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dead works to serve the living God. This is the only way for any soul to *draw nigh unto God.* Heb. vii. 17—27. ix. 13, 14. This is *the Rock* of which David prophesied. Psalm xl. 2—10. Heb. x. 5—14. This is *the Stone which the builders refused.* Psalm cxviii. 19—23. Mat. xxi. 42. And how many do so in our day ! If the sins of the elect were not *imputed* to Christ as their *Surety*, he never could have made any atonement for them, nor they be saved by him ; yet our author says, “ Some have secured themselves under the vapory idea that Christ was by *imputation* sinful, and sustaining this imputative sinful character, he was the object of divine displeasure.” P. 24. But he ought to know, that believers do not hold that Christ was ever made a sinful person ; or that the Father was ever angry with him ; but that he *made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21. When Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the head of the bullock, and it was killed before the Lord, and its inwards were burnt upon the altar, and its body without the camp, for a *sin-offering*, the bullock was not made a *sinner* thereby ; neither was Jesus, when he *suffered without the gate.* Exod. xxix. 10—14. Heb. xiii. 11, 12. And though Aaron was to lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and to confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, which was to bear upon him all their iniquities, unto a land not inhabited, the goat was not made a sinner thereby, any more than Christ was, when *the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Levi. xvi. 21, 22. Isaiah liii. 6. And we are solemnly warned against *laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith*
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towards

towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. How terrible will be the case of those who fall away from this foundation ! The word *baptisms* in this text, is the same Greek word that is translated *washings* in another chapter, wherein it is said, *Without shedding of blood is no remission.* Heb. vi. 1—6. ix. 10, 22. Life was forfeited by sin, and could only be recovered by blood, the life of the flesh ; for which reason Israel were never to eat blood ; and says God, *I have given it to you upon the altar, to make atonement for your souls.* Levi. iii. 17. xvii. 11. Abel was accepted in this way ; and all that dwell upon the earth worship the beast, whose names are not written in the book of life of the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* Rev. xiii. 8. Their cry hath been, *Who is like unto the beast ? Who is able to make war with him ?* His number is the number of a man. Rev. xiii. 4, 8, 18. Nothing must be allowed of in religion, but what can be comprehended and supported by *man*. Our author says,

“ 4. That in all God’s works one object is attended to as his great and last end.—The feelings of God towards himself are fully expressed in scripture. *I wrought for my name’s sake. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God.* Ezek. xx. 9. xxxvi. 32. He had himself in view as his chief object, when he caused creation to rise into existence, and the same he will pursue to the grand conclusion of all things. Thus he makes himself the beginning and end.—*God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST.* 2 Cor. iv. 6.” P. 25. 26.

Answer, It is indeed so ; but the *god of this world blinds the minds of unbelievers*, lest this glory should shine

shine unto them, as the apostle had just before observed. For God to be manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory, is the great *mystery of godliness*; whereon the church is built as the *pillar and ground of the truth*. But seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils have long since fixed an opposite notion of godliness in the minds of multitudes, even a supposal that *gain is godliness*. 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16. iv. 1. vi. 5, Satan declared that the penalty of the law was not *true*; but Christ bare witness unto the *truth*, and destroyed the power of the devil, through death. John xviii. 37. Heb. ii. 14, 15. And those who believe the contrary, are left to strong delusion to believe a lie. 2 Thess. ii. 3—12. Refraining from the forbidden fruit, was the pledge of Adam's allegiance to God, as the great proprietor and governor of the world; and by eating of it he became a *robber* and a *rebel*; and we are all born in this state of revolt, as the best of men have confessed. Psalm li. 5. Eph. ii. 3. And God will be justified in his sayings, and will overcome when he is judged. Rom. iii. 4, 9—19. Men have arraigned his sayings at their bar. He says, *If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die*. But the ways of men have been so *unequal*, as with their mouth to shew much love, while their heart went after their covetousness. They have ruled God's people with *force and cruelty*, and have used every art to prevent their having any good pasture, or clear water. But he who is the root and offspring of David, will cause these evil beasts to cease out of the land; and he says, *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*. A righteous father cannot save a wicked child, nor a wicked father hinder

der the salvation of his child that repents ; neither can any child of Adam be saved without a *perfect righteousness*, and perseverance therein. Ezek. xiv. 20. xviii. 20. xxxiii. 10—15, 31. xxxiv. 4, 17—25. Rev. xxii. 16, 17. And the violation of these plain truths, is the cause of all the blood, slavery and confusion in the world. The gospel proclaims *abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness*, as freely as ever water flowed. Rom. v. 17. But men have invented another language ; and it is now said,

“ 5. The plan of reconciliation left mankind in such a condition, as that they might be the objects of the just displeasure of God.—If it be only granted, that men have universally rejected the *offers* of salvation, and are criminal for such rejection, there can be no reasonable objections against God’s justice, if all men should be excluded from that salvation.” It is also said, “ The gospel-offers should be *as limited* as the premises from which they grow : for if the offers are more extensive than the provision offered, there is an appearance *at least* of something little better than deception.” P. 22, 27.

Answer, It is most certain, that the justice of God will ever shine clear in the condemnation of mankind, even in countries where they have not the written word. Rom. i. 18—21. And much more where they have it ; but gospel-offers, is the language of deceitful men, and not of the word of God ; who sent his Son to *preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn.* And when he made this proclamation, many wondered at his *gracious words*, until he let them know, that he had a good right to save whom he pleased,

pleased, even among the Sidonians or Syrians, and to leave many in Israel to perish in their sins; and then they were *filled with wrath*. Isaiah lxi. 1, 2. Luke iv. 17—29. And natural men discover the same disposition to this day. God never proclaimed atonement for *presumptuous* sinners; but such were to die without mercy, by the sentence of the priest and judge in Israel; and of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, *an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace!* Num. xv. 30, 31. Deut. xvii. 1—12. Heb. x. 26—29. His person never could be trodden under foot by any; but his laws and authority are so, to an amazing degree; and his *blood*, which *purgeth believers from all sin*, (1 John i. 7.) is now made use of to harden multitudes in iniquity, who would not dare to act as they do, if he had not died for sinners; and he only knows how many have done despite to the Spirit of grace. His grace hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Titus ii. 11—14. His proclamation of *grace* ever contained fixed characters, and a limited time. He says, *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*. And they who hold the contrary are *unbelievers and idolators*, with whom we ought not to be yoked. 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2, 14—18. The Son of God is infinitely above Moses; and the Holy Ghost saith, *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*. Heb. iii. 1—9. Yet these hearts are now appealed to, as our rule; and it is said, “Let no one be alarmed,
if

if we positively deny, that he suffered any of that divine wrath which sinners justly deserve ; for there can no such contradictory idea exist, that a being should be *angry* with an object with which he is at the same time *well pleased*." P. 33.

Here our sinful passions are set up against the eternal truth of God, who assures us, that he who spareth his rod *bateth* his son ; but he that *loveth* him, chasteneth him betimes. Prov. xiii. 24. Hence hatred and love are directly opposite to the carnal feelings of parents and children ; and the conduct of the *Son of God* under sufferings, ought to raise all our souls above the folly of *babes*. Prov. iii. 11, 12. Heb. v. 8—14. xii. 5—10. And to deny that God can do more than men, is infinitely worse than babes. Men readily admit of sureties for debt, and for the faithful discharge of promises and covenants ; and when a surety freely and fairly enters into bonds in such cases, justice as clearly exacts the bonds of the surety, as of the first contractor. Neither can justice be done to debtor or surety, if the judge is *angry* with them, or hath any *person in admiration because of advantage*. Men cannot justly admit of a surety in capital cases, because they cannot raise the dead, nor change the heart of the living ; but God can do both, and the whole plan of revelation, and of salvation by Jesus Christ, is built upon this truth. Hence he said to the disputers of that day, *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*. Mat. xxii. 29. And this error was so deeply rooted in the minds of his disciples, that one of them plainly says, *As yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead*. John xx. 9. And this point was disputed in the church of Corinth, which made the apostle say, *If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins*. But he boldly says, *Now is Christ risen from*

from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead: for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. And the belief of this is openly declared by every person who is rightly baptized. 1 Cor. xv. 20—23, 29.

As by union with Adam, our natural heads, we all die, so all believers will hereafter be raised by their union with Christ, their spiritual head. It is by *his voice* that any soul is now raised to spiritual life; and by *his voice* all will hereafter be raised from their graves; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. And says he, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honor from men; but I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.* John v. 25, 28, 29, 40—42. Yet these hearts, which have not the love of God in them, are now set up as our rule, instead of his revealed will. And our author says, "Let what scheme of atonement be invented that may, the whole weight of the arguments must depend on one of three general principles, either that atonement was made for only a part of mankind, while the other part are excluded even from a possibility of salvation by the plan; or, for all mankind, in such a sense, that none can be lost and the divine design be accomplished; or for all mankind, in the sense of a general principle upon which reconciliation may take place, and even millions lost, and the design be completely executed." P. 38.

Here all may see that the whole weight of his arguments turns upon *invented* schemes, and not upon what God has revealed. And we may discover the following errors in his inventions.

1. A want of distinguishing betwixt sin, the only

object

object of God's anger, and the person who bears it. Of the best of his saints it was truly said, *Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.* Psalm xcix. 8. He pardoned many in the wilderness, whose carcases he doomed to fall therein, for their unbelief. Yea, Aaron and Moses must openly know his displeasure, *because they sanctified him not in the midst of the children of Israel.* Num. xiv. 11, 20, 21. Deut. xxxii. 51. David's sin of adultery and murder were put away; and yet God requited him with the same evils in his family. One son defiled his daughter; another murdered him; and then drove his father from the throne, and lay with his wives in the sight of the sun. 2 Sam. xii. 7—14. xiii. 14, 29. xvi. 22. And though Solomon built the temple, and was greatly owned by God therein; yet ten tribes were rent away from his son, for his sin of sitting up the high places. And though immediate war betwixt the two kingdoms was prevented, yet it broke out afterwards; and half a million were slain in one day; the greatest slaughter that ever happened among mankind in any one day, since Adam fell. 2 Chron. xiii. 17, 18. How great then is God's anger against sin, even in his own people!

2. Our author appears to be strangely blinded, by the practice of taking the shadows of the law, to draw a vail over the truth and glory of the gospel. The word sin, is used in the law for a sin-offering; from whence many have tried to prove, that the words *sinned* and *sinners* in the gospel, mean *suffered* and *sufferers*. Rom. v. 12, 19. That is, they would prove from thence, that all mankind are sufferers, before they are sinners. But as the wages of sin is death, none can hold that he pays those wages where they are not due, without implicitly denying the justice
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of God, in his government of the world. Our author takes the same truth in the law, and says from thence concerning Christ, "For him to be made *sin* therefore, is for him to become a *sacrifice*, or an *offering for sin*." Yet, because actions are sometimes ascribed to God, which are performed by the devil and his children, and God said, *Thou shalt bruise his heel*, Remmele says, "Let no one then be alarmed, if we positively deny, that he suffered any of that divine wrath which sinners *justly* deserve." P. 32, 33. Hence,

3. He denies the essence of atonement. The infinite excellency of Christ's teaching and example, was so far from making any atonement for sin that it enhanced the guilt of those who despised and rejected him, above the guilt of the Sodomites, who *suffer the vengeance of eternal fire*. Luke x. 12. Jude 7. Blood upon God's altar, offered by his priest, by fire from heaven, is the only thing which could make an atonement for the soul, as we have before proved. And two sons of Aaron were struck dead, *because they offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not*. Levi. ix. 15—24. x. 1—3. And how terrible must it be for any to imagine, that Christ was sacrificed by the devil or his children, with fire from hell! Yet this is the natural effect of holding that the covenant of circumcision is the covenant of grace. For Abraham had no warrant to circumcise any person, who was not born in his house, until he had bought him as a *servant* with money. And since the death of Christ, by which he purchased his people, the tongues of them who are for *many masters*, *defile the whole body*, and *set on fire the whole course of nature*, and it is *set on fire of hell*. The wisdom of men who have bitter envying and strife in their hearts, is *earthly, sensual, devilish*. But the wisdom
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that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. James iii. 1, 6, 14—18. And the use of secular force to support religious teachers, was always full of partiality and hypocrisy; and this appears by their own account of how it was first introduced under the Christian name.

The Holy Ghost gave loud warnings to Christians, against observing days, months and years, in imitation of the shadows under the law. Gal. iv. 9—11. And against being spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit, so as to be subjected to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men; which is will-worship, and hath only a shew of humility. Col. ii. 8, 19—23. But the mystery of iniquity was carried so far, in the second and third centuries, as to call religious teachers priests, in distinction from other saints; and at length to set some teachers above the rest, under the name of bishops, with an imagination that they could make times, places and persons holy, by their decrees and administrations. This led on to the calling of wooden buildings churches, and baptism regeneration; as well as to the holding that office power in the church is derived by succession from other officers, and not from the community as a body. In the mean time, heathen persecution was become very odious, and the doctrine of a crucified Saviour very honorable; therefore, in the beginning of the fourth century, by a pretended revelation from heaven, the *cross* was erected as a military standard, to gratify, and not to crucify the flesh. And then each bishop was set up as a *high-priest*, to whom Constantine wrote, and said, "You, and other bishops, priests and deacons, ought to look unto the repairing of such *churches* as are under your government

ment and jurisdiction ; that those which are yet standing, may be repaired and enlarged ; or new built if occasion so require. And both you, and others in your name, may *will* and require the magistrates and governors of provinces to furnish you with materials necessary to the building or repairing thereof ; for we have signified unto them by our royal letters, that they shall willingly and cheerfully furnish you with whatsoever *your holiness* shall think necessary thereunto." This was his language to each bishop ; and " He confirmed with his royal authority, the *canons* and determinations of the *bishops*, which they had decreed in their public consistories, that so the *princes* of other nations might not abrogate their *decrees*. For the judgments of the *priesthood* in ecclesiastical matters, is to be preferred before the opinion of a *secular* judge." And when he had gone on in this way until the thirtieth year of his reign, the historian said, " His empire resembleth the celestial empire, so that lifting up his eyes to heaven, he governeth his subjects in this inferior empire, according to the pattern and form of the heavenly empire. For Law, which is the King of all, hath prescribed a Monarchy to be a government most suitable to prince and people ; for a monarchy doth exceed all other kinds of commonwealths and manners of government ; for that government is various which consisteth in an Aristocracy, or government of men equal in riches and dignity ; also a Democracy, or government of the people, which is opposed to a Monarchy, is rather a seditious confusion than a government." Yet in all this time Constantine never submitted to the yoke of Christ. But when he found his health to fail, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, he set off for the place where Jesus was baptized ; but when he came to
Nicomedia,

Nicomedia, he perceived that he should not reach there ; and then he assembled a number of bishops, and said to them, " Brethren, the salvation which I have earnestly desired of God these many years, I do now this day expect ; it is time therefore that we should be *sealed* and signed with the badge of immortality. And though I purposed to receive it *in* the river Jordan, *in* which our Saviour, for our example, was baptized ; yet God, knowing what is fittest for me, hath appointed that I shall receive it in this place, therefore let me not be delayed. And if he in whose power life and death are, will permit me to live any longer amongst you, and to join my prayers in the church, with the prayers of the congregation of God's people, I will live in such a regular manner, as may become a *servant of God*." After which, says the bishop, " The service of baptism was read, and they baptized him with all the ceremonies belonging to this *mysterious* sacrament. So that Constantine was the first of all the Emperors that was *regenerated* by the *new birth* of baptism, and that was signed with the sign of the *cross*, so that his spirit rejoiced, and being thus *regenerated*, his mind was illuminated, and by the raptures of faith so transported, that he admired in himself the wonderful *work of God*. After this sacred ceremony was performed, being clothed now in robes of light, instead of his robes of regality, he went home, and rested upon his royal bed, putting off his royal robes, which he would not any more endure to touch.— Afterward he made his last will and testament, and hereby gave honorable annual pensions to the citizens of Rome. He left unto his children the inheritance of his empire for their patrimony, and disposed of other matters in exprefs words as he thought convenient. These things were performed in the
time

time of the holy feast of Pentecost, beginning on the seventh Sunday after Easter, in a holy remembrance of the confirmation of the scriptures, by the ascending of Christ into heaven, and the descending of the Holy Ghost upon men. On the last day of this festival, the Emperor having thus disposed of all matters, died about noontide, leaving his mortal part to the earth; but his intelligible and divine part went to God.—The priests and people, with tears and lamentations, prayed unto God for the Emperor's soul; which prayers, though they were not much available, yet God so blessed his servant Constantine, that his sons succeeded him in his Empire; and as he desired, he had his tomb in the Apostles Church; and enjoyed the benefit of the *masses* and prayers read therein." *

This is the account of how *a form of godliness* was then adopted as an engine of state-policy; given by a bishop who was very active therein, and who also wrote the history of the church, from the birth of Christ, unto the death of Constantine, with raised expectations of glorious effects that would follow. But what were the effects? By removing the seat of the Empire to Constantinople, and dividing it among his three sons, Constantine prepared the way for its being rent and torn to pieces, and for the bishop of Rome to advance himself above all men upon earth, and above the God of heaven, whose Son came into the world to *bear witness unto the truth, and to destroy the works of the devil, which are lying and murder.* John viii. 44. xviii. 36, 37. 1 John iii. 7—14. And these evils were carried so far, before England was subjected to the Pope of Rome, that because the first archbishop of Canterbury could not effect it by fair

* Eusebius's life of Constantine; London edition, 1663, p. 3, 9, 29, 61, 70, 71, 73, 96.

fair means, he said to a synod of ministers, "Since you refuse peace from your brethren, you shall have wars from your enemies; and since you will not join with us in preaching the word of eternal life to your neighbours, you shall receive death from their hands;" as some thousands of them did soon after. And they pursued this bloody way until 1533, when the parliament of England forbid any more appeals to Rome, and set up their King as the head of the church. †

America had been discovered forty years before, and it was granted to the crown of Spain, by the Pope of Rome. But the crown of England soon after claimed the same power, and hath exercised *all the power of the first beast therein*, even down to our times. For God himself never claimed any higher power, than to bind us in all cases whatsoever. And the Son of God refused to make use of the *sword* to set up his kingdom, John xviii. 36, 37. Therefore the heads of the churches, both of Rome and England, have exalted themselves above the eternal God, who never could be guilty of *lying* nor *perjury*, nor of *enticing* any into sin. 2 Thess. ii. 3—12. Heb. vi. 17, 18. James i. 13—15. No wonder then that their worshippers are given to a strong delusion to believe a lie.

In 1602 a number of Christians in the joining borders of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire, obtained so much light from the word of God, as openly to withdraw from the church of England, "And as the Lord's free people, joined themselves by covenant into a church-state, to walk in all his ways, made known, or to be made known to them, according to their best endeavours, whatever it cost them." * For this they were cruelly persecuted in England, which caused their flight into Holland, where

† Rapin's history of England, vol. 1. p. 47, 68, 797.

* New-England Chronology, p. 4.

where they were pursued with injurious publications, under the name of Separatists and Independents, because they held that the church ought to be independent of the world, and to be governed wholly by the laws and Spirit of Christ. It was held in England, that the commanding power of the civil authority took away the offence, that men might otherwise give to weak brethren, in their use of indifferent things. Upon which it was said, "What more was ever given to the Pope, than that he might dispense with the *moral law*? And what less is given to the King, when by his authority I use things indifferent with offence to my weak brother? Is not love the fulfilling of the law? and is it not against the law of love to use things indifferent with offence?" Cor. viii. 11. Rom. xiii. 8. xiv. 4, 5, 13, 20."

Ten years after, those Independents came over and planted New-England; where their foundation principles now loudly call for the attention of their posterity, without which our INDEPENDENCE can never be maintained. For if we believe not, yet God abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself. 2 Tim. ii. 13. And not to condemn ourselves to the things which we allow, is the only way of happiness. Rom. xiv. 22. Every man who violates the universal rule of equity, exalteth himself above the eternal God, who never could do any such thing, and never will let the violation of it escape without punishment in any one instance. It is therefore impossible that sin can ever escape without punishment, either in the guilty person, or in his Surety. And we may now see that *reviling* and *lying* is the most dangerous *persecution* in the world, as it hath obscured the light more than corporal tortures ever did. Mat. v. 10—16. *Natural men* have always *persecuted* those who were *born*

* Robinson's answer to Bernard, 1610, p. 39.

born after the Spirit. Gal. iv. 29. First, because their *pride* was against allowing that others knew more than themselves; therefore they *spake evil of those things which they knew not*. Jude 10. Secondly, because the light of holiness is directly against *covetousness* which is *idolatry*; and the command of God is, *Be not ye partakers with them*. Eph. v. 1—7, 11. Thirdly, because it is also against *luxury*, even the walking in *lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries*; against which the gospel arms the minds of the saints. But says the apostle, *They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you*. 1 Peter iv. 1—4. Paul says, *Necessity is laid upon me—lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*. 1 Cor. ix. 16—27. He also says, *The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned*. Faith in Christ, who saves the chief of sinners, who had sinned ignorantly, and not presumptuously. But some had put away a good conscience, and concerning faith had made shipwreck. 1 Tim. i. 5, 13—16, 19. They were presumptuous and self-willed, under the name of liberty. 2 Pet. ii. 10, 19. Saints who shine as lights in the world expose the crooked ways of a perverse nation. Phil. ii. 15. God's two witnesses have therefore tormented them that dwelt on the earth. Men who have acted as lords over God's heritage are of the Gentiles, and they shall tread the holy city under foot forty and two months; and the last article of their victory appears to be the temple of God, and the altar. Rev. xi. 1—10. Mark x. 42. The world have long trampled upon the government which Christ appointed in his church; and when the merits of his blood are rejected, what have we more?

The

The Hebrew and Christian churches are his two candlesticks, into which he poured the oil of his grace, by his law and his gospel, the two olive-trees; the one revealing duty plainly, the other how it is performed acceptably, in his *kingdom which cannot be moved*. And every thing which can be shaken, is evidently now shaking, that *the desire of all nations may come, and his house be filled with glory*. Hag. ii. 6—9. Zech. iv. 2—12. Heb. xii. 18—24. Safety and happiness is the desire of all nations, and this will be gloriously enjoyed when the witnesses shall be raised above all earthly powers, *and the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*. *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament*. Rev. xi. 11—19. The first tables of the law were broken by man, but the second tables were kept whole in the ark; and the mercy seat was above upon it, just as long and just as broad as the ark. Over it was the cloud of glory, and none but the high-priest might go into the holy place where it was, and that but once a year, with the holy garments on, to sprinkle blood upon it, and to offer incense, by fire which came from heaven, and was kept alive upon the altar for burnt-offerings. And the people were to *afflict their souls* without, while the priest made atonement within. Levi. xvi. 13, 14, 24, 29, 34. After the Babylonian captivity, the Jews lamented the want of the ark, the cloud of glory, the holy garments, and the fire from heaven; but Christ hath them all to perfection, and we are most solemnly called to *go on unto perfection*. And nothing hath done more to obstruct it, than the imagination, that an *external succession of baptism, and laying on of hands*, is essential to any true church power in this world. Heb. vi. 1—6. Aaron and his sons were *anointed*

before their holy garments were put upon them, and then they *laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin-offering*. *Levi. viii. 6—8, 14.* And persons who were unclean, were to be sprinkled with the ashes of a burnt heifer, and then each one was to *wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and so be clean*. *Num. xix. 19.* Which divers baptisms were a figure of what Christ hath done to purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. He is *light*, and he is *love*; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This is he that came by water and blood. *1 John i. 5—10. iv. 8. v. 6.* And as God is light and love, every rational soul is under indispensable obligation to believe all his revealed will, and to obey all his commandments.

All the light that ever was enjoyed by fallen men, came from the *Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world*. But every one that doth evil hateth the light; and this is the condemnation. They hate him without a cause. And he says the Spirit reproveth of sin, because they believe not on me. *John i. 9, 29. iii. 14—21. xv. 25. xvi. 9.* He was within the Jewish church, when he warned them against looking any where else for his kingdom. *Luke xvii. 21.* But he is now at the right hand of the Father, making his people willing in the day of his power, to serve him in the beauties of holiness. And he will yet strike through Kings in the day of his wrath, and wound the heads over many countries. *Psalms cx. 1—3, 5, 6. Rev. xix. 11—21.* But many have been in such blindness, as to bring these scriptures to prove that God had set up a *light within them*, above his written word. Well therefore did he say,
If

If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! Mat. vi. 23. Had it not been for such darkness, men would not have told of God's *excluding* any from his free salvation ; nor of his *designing* atonement for any who are finally lost. Nor nor of any want of sincerity, in his proclaiming free grace to all, because he did not design to exert the *exceeding greatness of his power*, to bring all to *believe* therein. Eph. i. 19. Neither would men have denied the plain truth of God, who says, *As by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.* The one by a just sentence of law ; the other by a free gift of grace. The first man, by one offence ruined all his race ; the second man, delivers from *many offences* into the *justification of life.* Rom. v. 12—19. The first, which we derive from Adam, is loving the creature more than the Creator, or loving of pleasures more than God. Rom. i. 25. 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. This is to be *dead while we live.* 1 Tim. v. 6. Eph. ii. 1, 2. Hence to be *taught of God*, is the only way wherein any *can come* to Jesus Christ ; and *every man* who hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto him. John vi. 44, 45. The excellency which this knowledge brings them, is, gladly to quit all confidence in the flesh, and to place their trust and affections upon things above, where God is, and Christ at his right hand.

Each regenerate soul hath obtained like precious faith with the apostles ; and by giving all diligence, in the pursuit of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, they make their *calling and election sure* ; and find the holy scriptures to be a *more sure word of prophecy* than an audible voice from heaven. For the voice which Peter and John heard was external and transient ;

fient; but he who believeth on the Son of God, *hath the witness in himself*, of the eternal truth and excellency of the *record that God gave of his Son*; and those who charge him with *lying*, only confirm the truth of prophecy. 2 Peter i. 1—10, 19. 1 John v. 3, 10. And the salvation of God is nigh them who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.



With this Pamphlet may be had,

THE Author's late History of New-England,
Discourse of the Two Witnesses, and his
other Works.



